



Fernan Lake Road

Newsletter



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Western Federal Lands Highway Division

Volume 1

Introduction

This is the first newsletter for the Fernan Lake Road improvement project. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be working very closely with the East Side Highway District and the USDA Forest Service - Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) to determine the best ways to improve the road to Fernan Saddle.

A number of environmental and engineering studies will be done over the next several months to determine the most feasible alternative with the fewest impacts. More newsletters will be sent at regular intervals in the future to keep everyone with an interest in Fernan Lake updated about the state of these studies.

Fernan Lake Road

This project is focused on the current Fernan Lake Road access route which is designated as Idaho Forest Highway 80. It begins at the northeastern boundary of Fernan Lake Village (mile post [MP] 0.0), about 1.1 kilometers (km) (0.7 miles) north of the Sherman Road interchange of Interstate 90. The route parallels the northern edge of Fernan Lake, then goes northeast through private land and enters the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) at MP 5.3. The route ends at the Fernan/Huckleberry Mountain saddle within the IPNF (MP 10.7).

Fernan Lake Road is the primary recreational

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING SCOPING MEETING NO.2

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

**FERNAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
COEUR D' ALENE, IDAHO**

**PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDER AND PLAN TO
PARTICIPATE.**

access to Fernan Lake. It also provides access to residences, an established shooting range, and the IPNF lands, which includes campgrounds, picnic areas, and snowmobiling and hiking trails. In Dry Gulch, Jungle Gulch, Kelly Mountain, Huckleberry Mountain, Canfield Butte and Treasure Mountain.

Project Team

A team of engineering and environmental consultants have been assembled by FHWA to complete this project. The engineering firm assisting FHWA on this project is DJ&A, P.C. based in Missoula, Montana. They will be assisted by David Evans & Associates (DEA), NTL Engineering and Geosciences and ASC Group. This team will work closely with FHWA in developing the necessary alternatives, studies, environmental documentation, and designs necessary to complete the project.

Project Purpose and Need

The recreational opportunities of Fernan Lake and IPNF and the residences



along the road generate most of the traffic on Fernan Lake Road. The road is important for recreationists because it provides access to an established shooting range, snowmobiling, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, and picnicking. The road is also used for commercial timber hauling from timber harvest areas in the IPNF. Fernan Lake Road provides the sole access to approximately 6,000 acres to the IPNF and is more heavily used than other access roads into the forest because of its connection to I-90 at the Sherman Road interchange.

The existing road is narrow, has numerous sharp curves, a failing subgrade, a deteriorating road surface, and substantial horizontal alignment that limits sight distance ("blind curves"). There are no developed recreational parking areas and very few turnouts along Fernan Lake, so users park along the road, creating a safety hazard.

The overall purpose of the project is to improve, reasonably and cost effectively, the safety of Fernan Lake Road. Project objectives include:

- improving safety for current and future travelers
- reducing road maintenance costs
- correcting drainage problems
- providing off-road parking for recreational users

Project alternatives must meet these objectives reasonably and cost effectively. In addition, alternatives must be sensitive to the environmental conditions in the project area and minimize adverse environmental impacts. All improvements must be consistent with the applicable guidelines from the IPNF Forest Plan and Kootenai County plans and ordinances.

Alternatives

Several alternatives are being considered to correct the problems with Fernan Lake Road: (1) improvements to a 32-ft paved width to MP 5.3, (2) improvements to a 28-ft paved width to MP 5.3, (3) improvements to either a 32-ft or a 28-ft paved with curve modifications at the sharpest curves, and (4) widening to a uniform width combined with a re-route of the segment between MP 1.9 and MP 2.3. All of these alternatives include rehabilitation of the segment between MP 5.3 and MP 10.7, keeping the current paved width (26 ft).

In addition, several alternatives completely avoiding Fernan Lake Road have been identified, that would improve other routes providing access to IPNF lands. These will be evaluated only to the extent that they meet the purpose and need of this project, which is described above. Adequate funds are not available to improve more than one access route.

These will be compared to the No-Build alternative, under which the road would remain in its currently deficient condition and continue to deteriorate.

Public Involvement

On May 18, 2000 the first in a series of public meetings was held to provide information about the project and to receive public input. Individual meetings have been held with permitting agencies and the Fernan Lake and Valley Association. Additional public meetings will be held throughout the process to obtain input and information regarding the proposed project and keep you informed about our progress. The next meetings are proposed for:

July 12, Scoping Meeting No. 2 (see page 1)
October, Informational Meeting No. 1

Additional information, mailers and newspaper advertisements will be provided for each of these meeting places and times. If you have a group organization or if you know of people who are not on the mailing list and would like to be, please

to be, please have them contact Christy Darden, FHWA at **360-696-7700** or e-mail at **fernlanlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov**

Project Highlights

A project checklist (PC) has been developed for this project. The PC is used by Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as part of its early coordination and data-gathering process for a proposed action. The PC provides an opportunity for public and governmental agencies that may be affected by the proposed action or have regulatory or administrative interest to become involved in the project development process at an early stage. The checklist describes the need for the project and the scope of the proposed improvements and alternatives. It contains the information available from any preliminary location studies, engineering investigations, and environmental studies completed to date. This checklist is available at the Fernan Lake Ranger station of the IPNF or by contacting Christy Darden at FHWA (360-696-7700).



Drilling Operations.

Additional studies and investigations will be completed over the next few months. (The geotechnical drilling has already begun as you may have noticed). They are drilling to determine the existing geology along the roadway. This information will provide data on the condition of the existing roadway.

Environmental Studies

Also starting soon will be the wetlands and sen-



sitive species studies necessary for the project. Ecologists and wetlands specialists will be in the area completing these investigations during the months of

July and August. The field investigations will be primarily visual with minimal disturbances

Issues and Concerns

Comments were requested in the first Scoping Meeting and from the Homeowners Association Meeting regarding the issues and concerns regarding the proposed improvements. Numerous additional comments have been received following the initial meetings. These are the primary concerns expressed:

- ✓ Alternate Routes NOT Desired in Fernan Hill Area
- ✓ Water Quality of Lake and Streams
- ✓ Construction Impacts to Residents/Residences
- ✓ Wetlands/Mitigation/Restoration
- ✓ Hillside Stability and Fill in Lake
- ✓ Parking on Roadway and Tree Removal
- ✓ Speed Limit Enforcement

Many other issues and concerns were voiced and these will be summarized in the displays for the next public meeting.



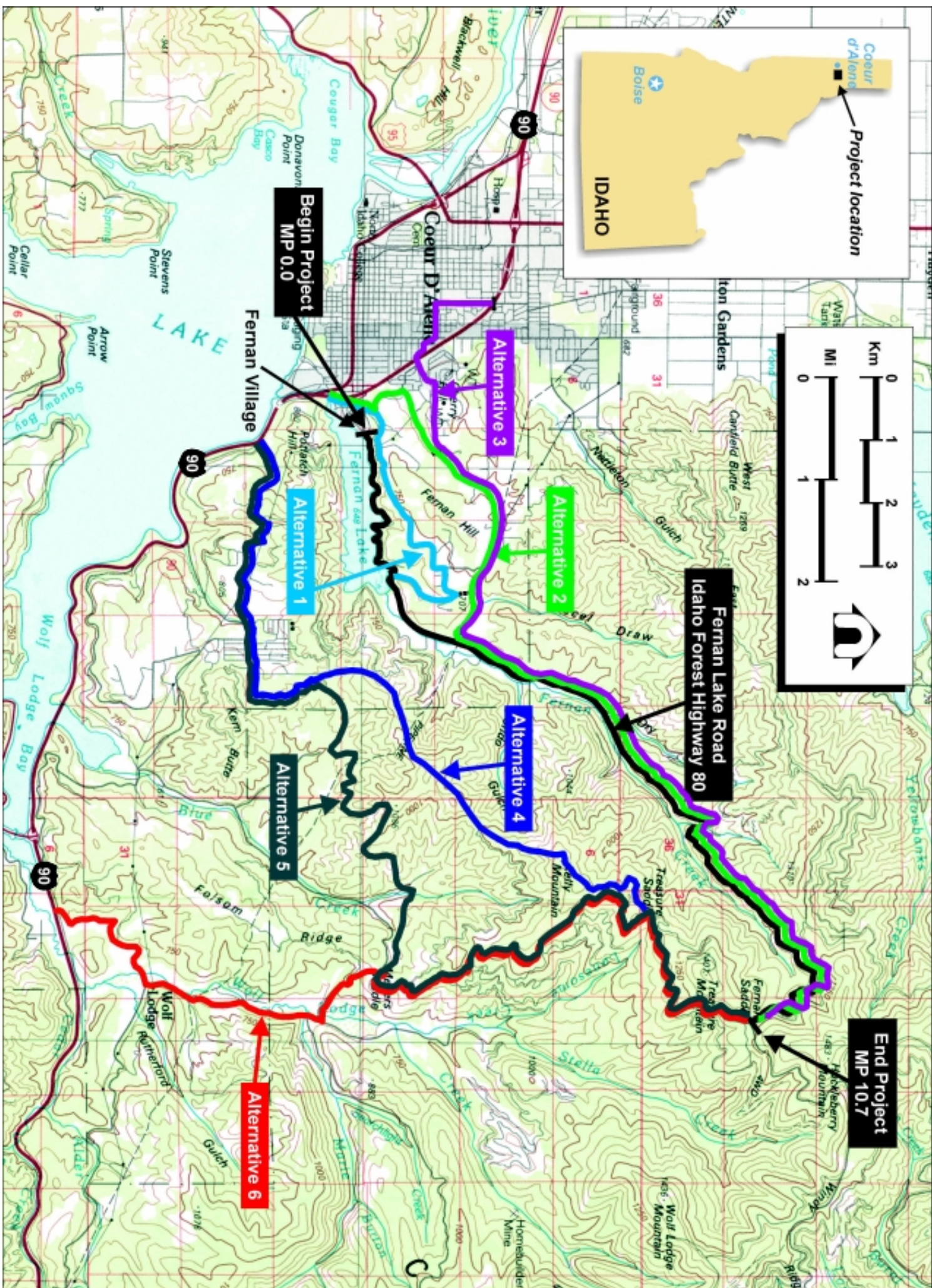
Project Schedule

The proposed schedule for the project is as follows:

Public Involvement	Ongoing through project
Field work/environmental studies	Spring-Summer 2000
Geotechnical Testing	Spring-Summer 2000
Draft Environmental Assessment	Spring 2001
Final Environmental Document	Spring 2002
Engineering Design/Final Design	Spring 2004
Construction	2004



CHRISTY DARDEN
WESTERN FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY DIVISION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
610 EAST FIFTH STREET
VANCOUVER, WA 98661-3893



Q: *Where was the funding obtained for this project?*

A: The funding for this project is through the Federal Highway Program Administration's (FHWA) Forest Highway Program. This project was nominated by the East Side Highway District in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service-Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF). The objective of the Forest Highway Program is to construct or to improve roads which connect our national forests to the main state transportation network.

Q: *Why are alternative routes being considered other than the existing Fernan Lake Road?*

A: These alternatives were identified as possible ways to meet some of the objectives of the project, but avoid impacts to Fernan Lake. The alternatives that are shown can provide access to the Forest lands which is one part of the purpose and need for this project. Some of the alternatives have more adverse impacts than improving the existing road. However, these alternatives need to be considered.

Q: *What has happened so far during the Public Involvement*

A: To initiate the project, FHWA conducted a public scoping meeting on May 18, 2000 at the Fernan Elementary School. At these meetings, FHWA described the planning process that will be used for this project. They solicited public input regarding concerns about the project and issues which the public felt should be addressed by the environmental and engineering studies. This meeting was attended by approximately 70 people. A comment form was distributed to the public at these meetings. 129 of these questionnaires have been returned to FHWA to date. Several important public concerns were raised at the meetings and through the comment forms by both those in favor of the proposed project and those opposed to it. These concerns center around: safety, water quality, use of the area, quality of recreational use, type of vehicles to be allowed, provision for bicycles and pedestrians, and costs. In addition, meetings are being held with interested agencies and organizations at the federal, state, county, and local

resources, cultural and historic resources, Right-Of-Way, and many others.

Q: *During the scoping phase, what are some of the concerns for alternative routes that have been received by the project?*

A: The Fernan Hill Road options are good examples of concerns raised along alternative routes. Comments and information received to date on Alternatives 1, 2, & 3 would indicate that these options would have many adverse impacts. Concerns identified include the utilization of city streets, impacts to established neighborhoods, the crossing of 3 school zones, and potential wildlife impacts. However, we need to consider a range of alternatives in order to select the option that minimizes the adverse impacts and meet the purpose and need of the project.

Q: *What is a Project Checklist and how do I get a copy?*

A: The Project Checklist describes the project need, scope, alternatives being considered, an initial estimate of environmental resources, potential impacts, and related issues. The information in the checklist helps determine what type of environmental document is required for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The checklist also contains the results of the location studies, engineering

investigations, and environmental studies completed to date. To obtain a copy, contact FHWA at either (360) 696-7700 or at fern anlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov.

Q: *What happens next?*

A: FHWA will continue to meet with all interested parties and groups. After obtaining comments and ideas, environmental and preliminary engineering studies will begin to address the issues raised throughout the scoping process. These studies will take approx. 8 months to complete. FHWA will be holding additional public meetings this fall to share information obtained during the preliminary environmental and engineering studies being conducted this summer and discuss ideas about possible road alignments. After which time, an environmental assessment will be prepared.

